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January 20, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D. *Thomas L. Garthwaite*
Director and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. *Jonathan E. Fielding*
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **WATER AVAILABILITY AND HAULED WATER**
[Relates to Agenda Item #2, January 20, 2004]

On July 22, 2003 the Board approved a motion by Supervisor Antonovich which was amended by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, instructing the Directors of Health Services, Public Works, and Planning to prepare a report on the advisability of reevaluating the Water Availability Policy with recommendations to address the severe impact to residents caused by the determination that hauled water is not appropriate as a safe, reliable source of potable water, and that water availability affects the ability to develop their property. This is an update to our October 21, 2003 memo.

We previously reported that we had met with the Departments of Public Works, Regional Planning, and Fire, the State Department of Health Services, and representatives of the Third and Fifth Supervisorial Districts in September. We also participated in two community meetings in the Antelope Valley in November, where the departments presented the policy and received input and feedback from the public.

Information provided and issues raised at the November meetings concerned policies of a number of departments. From the comments of residents at the meetings it became clear that there is a significant number who are using hauled water, principally, but not exclusively, because their wells have run dry or their yield has dwindled to the point where supplementation is needed. Further, in a small number of instances it appears that approval for construction was obtained without DHS having been consulted to establish the adequacy of water that could be obtained by digging a well.

Two specific health-related issues were raised: 1), are there circumstances or conditions under which the Health Officer could find that hauled water is potable, and 2) are the testing requirements for well water yield excessive given what is known about the hydrogeology of the geographic areas in question? We agreed to investigate these two specific and narrow issues of the overall hauled water policy concerns.

CAN HAULED WATER BE POTABLE?

Following the community meetings, Departmental staff reviewed the issue of whether there are ways to assure that hauled water can be potable. Staff have specifically reviewed various filtration and disinfection systems, and have identified several State-approved systems.

Based on new information, we have come to the tentative conclusion that use of a properly maintained State approved filtration and disinfection system would provide reasonable assurance that hauled water is potable and safe for household use. This system would be installed between the storage tank and the house, and include several filters and an ultraviolet lamp for disinfection. Estimated cost of the equipment is \$3,000 plus labor for installation. The annual maintenance costs would be approximately \$350.

Implementation of a policy to allow hauled water to be used, with filtration/disinfection, would require an ordinance to establish a permit, and a fee to cover the Department's costs in reviewing plans, inspecting the installation, and monitoring annual maintenance.

Please note that this filtration/disinfection solution only addresses whether there is a way to have reasonable assurance that hauled water is potable. Because of the criticalness of routine maintenance and upkeep of these systems, reliance on municipal water or well water meeting EPA standards, provides better long-term assurance of potable water. The availability of a technical solution through filtration/disinfection does not address the broader planning and development issues of whether development should be permitted in the absence of municipal or well water. This broader issue is beyond the expertise of this department and requires involvement of other departments.

WELL TESTING STANDARDS

Following the community meetings, we have reviewed our standards for determining the yield of a well. We met with a hydrogeologist who is familiar with the Antelope Valley and the issues of well-yield testing. We also reviewed the policy with the State and researched policies of other counties.

Based on this review, we are drafting a proposed revision to the well-yield testing requirements, which will simplify the procedure. We plan to obtain expert review and input on the draft and expect to finalize it for implementation by February 29, 2004. Implementation of this revised policy is expected to simplify and clarify the well-yield testing standards, but does not address issues of long-term loss of aquifer for the wells.

Dependent on the outcome of the discussion of these issues at the January 20, 2004 Board meeting, we will report back by February 29, 2004 with a further update. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

TLG:JEF:js

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director of Planning
Director of Public Works
Fire Chief